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ABSTRACT

Data were collected from 734 respondents, employees of a large Midwestern utility organization, to a survey questionnaire which attempted to examine the employees' reactions to the company newspaper. Specifically, the study sought to compare group phenomena among readers with respect to their inclinations to read the newspaper and their perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source of information. A concomitant purpose of the study was to determine whether certain work-related variables (job level, years of service, work location) that have been found to interfere with effective communication between individuals in organizational settings would also appear to operate in the context of mass communications transactions. Among the findings were that (1) veteran employees (particularly those with 20 or more years of service) were more faithful readers of the newspaper than employees with less company tenure, but this group was not found to differ significantly from those with fewer years of service in their perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source of information; (2) persons classified as management read more of the newspaper and had a greater confidence in the newspaper's honesty and accuracy than did non-management employees; and (3) employees working in the city where the company's headquarters was located (and where the newspaper was produced) were substantially more inclined to perceive the newspaper as a credible source of information than were employees working at other locations throughout the state. (HOD)

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PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNAL AUDIENCES: A STUDY OF GROUP PHENOMENA AMONG READERS OF A COMPANY-WIDE NEWSPAPER FOR EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

This study examined a large employee population--the target audience for a company newspaper--to determine whether audience reactions to mass communications transactions might represent "group" phenomena; that is, behaviors characteristic of identifiable segments of an employee public. Three employment-related variables which have been identified as barriers to communication in the organizational context were used to compare groups of employees with respect to readership habits and perceptions of newspaper credibility. These variables were: job levels, years of service with the company, and work locations. In addition, the study examined the relationship between the perceived volume of coverage given by the newspaper to a significant organizational action and employees' perceptions of newspaper credibility. Independent variables used in this analysis were: too little coverage, about the right amount of coverage, and too much coverage.

The study was conducted in a large Midwestern organization which operates state-wide and produces a weekly tabloid for an employee population exceeding 11,000. Data were collected from 734 respondents to a survey questionnaire which was mailed to a sample of the employee population.

Statistically significant findings were associated with all three independent variables used to identify employee groups. More specifically, veteran employees (particularly those with twenty or more years of service) were found to be more faithful readers of the newspaper than employees with less company tenure, but this group was not found to differ significantly from those with fewer years of service in their perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source of information. Persons classified as management were found to read more of the newspaper and to have greater confidence in the newspaper's honesty and accuracy than did nonmanagement employees. The work locations variable (roughly synonymous with physical distance) identified no significant differences in readership habits but was associated with significant differences in perceived newspaper credibility: employees working in the company's headquarters city (where the newspaper was produced) were substantially more inclined to perceive the newspaper as a credible source of information than were employees working at other locations throughout the state.

A strong positive relationship was found to exist between perceived newspaper credibility and perceptions of the newspaper's coverage of a proposed customer service rate increase as being sufficient (neither too much nor too little).

Paper presented to the Public Relations Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Gainesville, Florida, August 6, 1984.

TOWARD A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNAL AUDIENCES: A STUDY OF GROUP PHENOMENA AMONG READERS OF A COMPANY-WIDE NEWSPAPER FOR EMPLOYEES

A pervasive theme in the literature on internal communications in organizations is that employees should be kept informed about matters of consequence to the organizational whole. In large companies with widely dispersed employee populations the onus for insuring that every employee is an informed employee typically rests, in large measure, upon the editor and staff of the company newspaper. Professional communicators are painfully aware, however, that making information available to people provides no assurance that the material will be read or, just as importantly, that it will be believed. The success of a company newspaper in contributing to a well informed, understanding and supportive employee population is determined--at least in part--by the willingness of employees to read what is written and to perceive the newspaper as a credible source of information.

Communication authorities are widely in agreement that a communicator must "know" the audience, must be aware of audience segmentation if successful communication strategies are to be devised. Recent research indicates, however, that time-honored assumptions may no longer be valid where employee behaviors and attitudes are concerned.

For example, the traditional notion that management-level personnel can be counted upon to attach credibility to all official company communications and to defend all company actions is called into question by reports such as that of Morgan and Schiemann (1983). This report, based on a study by Opinion Research Corporation, reveals that managerial personnel and nonmanagerial employees alike perceive a general deterioration of meaningful internal communication within today's organizations and acknowledge the grapevine as their primary source of information.

Similarly, the assumption that young employees are typically eager to be assimilated into the corporate structure and, hence, are avid consumers of the corporate word is challenged by reports such as that of Robert Aiello (1983), "They Hear You...But They're Not Listening."

Aiello reports that young employees are psychologically disposed to remain detached from the organization and are more likely to be dedicated to their occupations or professions than to their employers. He further contends that young workers resist the inclination of their forebears to place the company centermost in their lives and, further, are extremely vocal about corporate matters which they question or disapprove. He concludes that the attitudes of younger employees create "a new kind of barrier for internal communicators to breach" (p. 19).

These reports and others which indicate changing attitudes among today's employees toward work and the workplace give rise to antithetical possibilities with respect to internal audiences. The Morgan-Schiemann study suggests that traditional differences with respect to communication attitudes and behaviors may be leveling or even disappearing, particularly where management/nonmanagement groups are concerned. The Aiello report raises the possibility that group differences may become more pronounced as younger workers bring new attitudes and priorities to the entry-level posititions they occupy.

A study conducted by Pavlik, Nwosu and Ettel (1982) also has relevance here. This study produced findings that neither position in the decision-making hierarchy, nor level of career aspirations, nor length of employment with the company were positively associated with greater overall readership of the company newsletter. The primary hypothesis of the study--that a higher level of integration into the organization would be accompanied by a higher readership of the organization's employee publication--was not supported.

The study being reported here was similarly concerned with examining an employee population as target audience for a company publication. In this instance the focus was upon determining whether identifiable segments of an employee public might be characterized as being more resistant or more receptive to communication efforts than others. Details of the study follow.

Purposes of the study

This investigation was exploratory. The study was designed to compare group phenomena among readers of a company newspaper with respect to their inclinations to read the newspaper and their perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source of information. A concomitant purpose of the study was that of determining whether certain work-related variables which have been found to interfere with effective communication between individuals in organizational settings might also appear to be operative in the context of mass communications transactions. The

three variables used in the study (job levels, work locations, and years of service with the company) were treated as independent variables in making group comparisons.

In addition, data were generated which permit an examination of the relationship between the perceived volume of coverage given to a significant company issue (i.e., too little coverage, about the right amount of coverage, or too much coverage) and employees' perceptions of source credibility. This analysis focused upon three additional, self-identified groups of employees: the under-informed, the adequately informed, and the over-informed.

A 1957 study conducted by Toran of varied communication programs at three different plants of a single manufacturing firm produced findings that most of the employees were not well informed about the company, that most employees had favorable attitudes toward the company, and that employees who were well informed did not necessarily have favorable attitudes. These findings are somewhat surprising in the light of contemporary theory. However, Toran acknowledged certain research limitations with respect to the latter finding and suggested that further investigations were needed. Also, it might be argued that both worker expectations and communication practices have changed since 1957 and that a similar study would not produce the same findings today. While the argument seems entirely reasonable, a very recent study fails to support it.

Morgan and Schiemann (1983), reporting on the ongoing study of employee attitudes conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, state that the majority of employees surveyed, irrespective of job levels, felt that they were under-informed by top management. Still, these same employees gave high ratings to the credibility of internal communications in their respective organizations. The report further indicates that while credibility ratings remain high, they have been slipping during the past decade. Even so, the ORC study tends to support Toran's finding of little or no relationship between being well informed and having confidence in the information source.

Since neither the Toran research nor the Morgan-Schiemann study was limited to information gained through the printed word, a re-examination of the relationship between perceived adequacy of information and perceptions of source credibility in the context of newspaper coverage seemed in order.

Research setting

The study was conducted in a large Midwestern utility organization. The company has numerous offices and service operations throughout the state in which

it is located. A staff of four, in addition to a part-time artist/photographer, produces a six- to eight-page weekly tabloid for an employee population of more than 11,000 persons. Data were collected from 734 respondents to a survey questionnaire, which will be discussed more fully in a later section of this report. To preserve anonymity, the host organization will not be identified by name.

Selection of variables

Clues to the kinds of group "membership" which might prove useful in analyzing readers' reactions to a company newspaper were largely drawn from studies of interpersonal communication transactions in organizational environments. Of particular relevance to this investigation were job-related variables which have been identified as "barriers" to communication. The three variables used in the study were: job levels, years of service with the company, and work locations.

Job levels. The job level barrier, which has been identified by numerous researchers, including Hage, Aiken and Marrett (1971), Kobayashi (1970), Blau and Scott (1962) and Gardner (1946), was comprised of two categories: management and nonmanagement. These categories evolved from Gardner's contention that large organizations tend to become segmented and to divide informally along horizontal lines, workers comprising one group and management another. Each group, Gardner reports, tends to assume a defensive posture with respect to the other (p. 16).

It should be noted that the management/nonmanagement categories used in this study were tantamount to nonunion/union in the context of the host organization. All non-contract personnel in the company were classified as management. This group included office personnel and select others who did not have supervisory or policy-making responsibilities. Collectively, the management group represented about 35 percent of the total employee population.

Years of service with the company. A second employment-related variable used in the study, years of service with the company, was found to be associated with differences in communication attitudes and behaviors by Newcomb, Turner and Converse (1965) and by Kobayashi (1970). Both reports indicate that attitudinal and behavioral differences accompany differences in years of service, but the findings of these researchers, when extrapolated to the situation of employees as newspaper audience, lead to ambivalent expectations.

Kobayashi holds that veteran employees, particularly those who have been with a firm since its early years, develop a proprietary interest in the well being of

the organization and, hence, are more participatory and have a greater sense of personal involvement in company affairs. Newer employees, he reports, are inclined toward greater indifference, content with whatever stability the organization has already achieved. Kobayashi's conclusion is essentially in accord with the contention of Aiello (1983) that "younger" workers remain detached from the organization, maintaining "the attitude of an outsider rather than of a loyal, lifetime employee" (p. 19).

Newcomb, Turner and Converse hold that veteran employees, through their years of experience, acquire personal information upon which to draw and are therefore more resistant to "new" information and less willing to attach credibility to new information from "socially mediated sources" (e.g., a company newspaper). Newer employees, with less stored information, are both more receptive to, and more believing of, new information, according to this report.

Both Newcomb and Kobayashi used the terms "veteran" and "newer," but neither study indicates exactly how these classifications translate into years. A comparable variable, "length of employment," was used in the study reported by Pavlik, Nwosu and Ettel (1982), but again the researchers were not specific about longevity in terms of actual years.

To know precisely when a newer employee becomes a veteran is difficult at best. Further, broad categories such as "less than 10 years" and "more than 10 years" do not provide opportunities for observing any trends that might appear to be associated with time. Also, while "newer" employees are not necessarily "younger" employees, the correlation between age and years of service is typically strong. It was found that in the host organization a large majority of the "new hires" <u>were</u> young people: however, because of economic conditions relatively few new hires were being added to the workforce. Thus, an initial plan to use a "less than one year" category as a years-of-service group was abandoned because this category was certain to produce a disproportionately small sample.

Ultimately, four categories were arbitrarily adopted for the investigation. These were:

0 to 5 years
6 to 10 years
11 to 20 years
More than 20 years

<u>Work locations</u>. A third barrier to communication, work locations (roughly synonymous with geographical distance in this study), was suggested by the reports of Rogers and Roethlisberger (1953), Planty and Machaver (1956) and

Sanborn (1961), among others. All three of these studies indicate that company size coupled with geographic remoteness is conducive to psychological remoteness among employees. Rogers and Roethlisberger summarize the communication problem posed by combined size/distance factors, saying that "achieving understanding between larger groups that are geographically remote" is a substantially different problem from that of achieving understanding in small face-to-face groups (p. 46).

A mass communications medium should, by its very nature, be impervious to distance. Still, the suggestion of psychological distance among distant employees cannot be ignored. Typically, a company newspaper is produced at or near the company headquarters, where decisions are made which affect the corporate body. One important purpose which these publications are intended to serve is that of making each employee, wherever his work station, feel that he is a part of the corporate whole by keeping him informed about matters which affect the company's, and his own, well being. If the fact of physical remoteness is conducive to psychological remoteness in an employee audience, then corporate communicators face a very special problem.

The employee population of the host organization for this study was found to be relatively equally divided between the company's headquarters city and numerous cities, large and small, throughout the state. No effort, therefore, was made to equate physical distance with miles. Rather, for comparative purposes the work locations variable was comprised of two categories:

In-city -- the city where the company headquarters was located and where the newspaper was produced.

Outstate -- all company offices, operations or work locations other than those in the headquarters city.

Operational Definitions

Perceived newspaper credibility

McGuire (1973) explains perceived credibility as follows:

> The source's believability reflects the extent to which his message is perceived by the recipient as being correct and in accord with empirical evidence. Hence, it depends on the recipient's perception of the source as knowing what is correct and being motivated to communicate what he knows . . . . For maximum believability, the source must be perceived as not only knowing the truth but being objective enough to be motivated to tell it as he sees it. (pp. 230-231)

Perceived newspaper credibility was constitutively defined in this study as crediting the company newspaper with honesty and accuracy in its coverage of a

significant and controversial organizational action. The action singled out for purposes of examining perceived newspaper credibility was that of a company-proposed increase in customer service rates, which was pending at the time the study was undertaken. Such proposals are invariably controversial in that the company must justify asking a captive public to pay more for something that is unavailable from any competitive source. Such proposals typically take months, sometimes years, to bring to a conclusion, and throughout the review period the action remains newsworthy as new developments (filings, hearings, etc.) move the proposal along to its ultimate conclusion.

Operationally, perceived newspaper credibility was defined in this study as a survey respondent's affirmative reply to this forced-choice question on the survey questionnaire:

> Did the company newspaper provide an honest and accurate report of the facts relating to the proposal to increase customer service rates? (Yes or No)

Perceived volume of coverage

A series of items on the survey questionnaire identified specific categories of news content which respondents were asked to evaluate in terms of how much space the newspaper was devoting to each. That is, for each content category a respondent was to evaluate in terms of a) too little coverage, b) about the right amount of coverage, c) too much coverage. At the end of the list of news categories was this item:

> Evaluate the amount of coverage given to the company's proposal to increase customer service rates.
>
> a) Too little b) About right c) Too much

Whereas preceding items consisted of fairly general content descriptions (e.g., company sports, company benefits), this item dealt with a specific and significant company action. Respondents' answers to this item represented the operational definition of "perceived volume of coverage." These data were used to determine the relationship between perceptions of information adequacy and confidence in source credibility.

With respect to question sequence, the "perceived volume of coverage" item immediately preceded the question calling for an assessment of the honesty and accuracy of the newspaper's coverage of the service-rate proposal. The latter question was regarded as the most potentially sensitive question on the survey

instrument, and the space-evaluation question provided a logical lead-in to the credibility inquiry.

Readership habits

Data to determine the readership habits of various groups of employees were derived from this question on the survey instrument:

How much of the newspaper do you usually read?

a. Almost all of every issue
b. About 75% of every issue
c. About half of every issue
d. About 25% of every issue
e. Almost none of the paper

Responses to this question were combined to form only two categories at the data reduction stage of the research. This was done so that two-by-two and two-by-four contingency tables could be used in conjunction with the chi-square test. The two categories which evolved from this data were: a) half or more of the newspaper; b) less than half of the newspaper. Inasmuch as this study was not concerned with precisely how much of the newspaper was being read but, rather, was concerned with differences in newspaper consumption among various groups of employees, this compression of data into two descriptive categories seemed appropriate to the purposes of the study.

Methodology

Data for the investigation were gathered by a mailed survey questionnaire. A computer-drawn systematic sample without replacement was the sampling method used in securing a sample of 1,222 employees for the study. Questionnaire returns totaled 734, representing a 60 percent return rate. Follow-up efforts were credited with 91 of the returns, representing 12.4 percent of the total received.

The substantial size of the sample made the printing and postage costs of mailing a second questionnaire to nonrespondents prohibitive. Therefore, commemorative stamps were used on both the outgoing questionnaire and the return envelopes to insure that the material would not have the appearance of junk mail. Commemorative postcards (also first-class) were used for follow-up.

The survey instrument was comprised of a cover letter and 28 items. Demographic questions (e.g., years of service) were placed at the end. The cover letter provided assurance that the company had approved, but was not sponsoring, the research and that total confidentiality would be observed. The return envelopes bore a campus address. Copies of the company newspaper (a full year's production) were analyzed before the questionnaire was constructed to insure that

all questions were meaningful within the context of the organization.

Characteristics of the survey respondents were compared to characteristics of the company's total workforce to assess the representativeness of the respondent population (see Appendix A). The percentage of survey respondents in each of the several demographic categories used in the study was found to approximate very closely the percentage of employees in the total workforce making up each of those same categories. Thus, while the numerical size of the groups being compared in this study sometimes varied, the size variations were proportionately the same as those existing in the company's total workforce.

Data analysis

The chi-square test of statistical significance was used to analyze comparative data. The confidence level used in each instance was .05. Independent variables used in these analyses were: job levels, years of service with the company, work locations, and perceived volume of coverage.

Findings

Group readership habits

As indicated by the data in Table 1, differences in readership habits were found to be associated with job levels and also with years of service. Management personnel were found to read more of the newspaper than nonmanagement employees, and veteran employees (particularly those with more than twenty years of service) reported reading more of the newspaper than did employees with less tenure. The least avid readers among all groups examined were those employees with five or fewer years with the company, of whom 76.9 percent reported that they regularly read half or more of the company publication. By contrast, employees with more than twenty years of service were found to be the most aggressive readers among all groups examined, with 90.3 percent reporting that they consumed half or more of the newspaper each week.

The work locations variable identified no significant group differences with respect to readership: outstate employees (those working outside the headquarters city) were found to read as much of the newspaper as their in-city counterparts. The slight (3 percent) difference which distinguished the reading habits of in-city workers from those of outstate employees was not found to be statistically significant ($p > .250$).

TABLE 1

Communication Behaviors and Perceptions of Employees
by Job Levels, Years of Service and Work Locations

Behaviors/ Perceptions	Job Levels				Years of Service								Work Locations			
	Management n=267		Nonmanagement n=461		0 to 5 n=156		6 to 10 n=95		11 to 20 n=252		Over 20 n=226		In-city n=445		Outstate n=289	
Newspaper Readership:																
Half or more	235	88.0%	373	80.9%	120	76.9%	80	84.2%	206	81.8%	204	90.3%	377	84.7%	236	81.7%
Less than half	32	12.0%	88	19.1%	36	23.1%	15	15.8%	46	18.2%	22	9.7%	68	15.3%	53	18.3%
		($p < .025$)*					($p < .005$)*							($p > .250$)		
Perceived Newspaper Credibility:																
Affirmative	227	90.1%	335	79.8%	125	85.0%	80	88.9%	197	84.2%	162	79.8%	375	89.3%	189	74.4%
Negative	25	9.9%	85	20.2%	22	15.0%	10	11.1%	37	15.8%	41	20.2%	45	10.7%	65	25.6%
		($p < .001$)*					($p < .25$)							($p < .001$)*		

Note: Raw scores differ from n where data was missing.
* Within the .05 level of statistical significance.

Group perceptions of newspaper credibility

As shown in Table 1, statistically significant differences in perceived credibility were found to be associated with job levels and work locations ($p < .001$ for each analysis), but not with years of service ($p < .25$). Persons in the management category held more favorable perceptions than did those in the nonmanagement category, and in-city employees were substantially more prone to credit the newspaper with honest, accurate reporting than were out-state personnel.

The years of service variable revealed no statistically significant differences among groups of employees, but nonetheless yielded some interesting data. Confidence in the publication was greatest among employees with 6 to 10 years of service, of whom 88.9 percent responded affirmatively to the newspaper credibility question. The group least inclined to credit the publication with credible reportage was the group with more than twenty years of service. This is the same group who earlier were cited as the most dedicated readers of the newspaper among all groups examined.

Also, a relatively large number (85 percent) of newer employees (those with five or fewer years of service) indicated that they believed the newspaper to be a credible source of information. This same group was previously mentioned as the group least prone among all groups examined to read half or more of the newspaper each week.

Volume of coverage and perceived newspaper credibility

This analysis was concerned with the relationship between employees' perceptions of the newspaper's adequacy, inadequacy, or excessiveness in covering an issue of importance to the organization and their perceptions of the newspaper as a credible information source.

The coverage examined was that given to the company's proposal to increase customer service rates, which had been "in the works" for several months prior to the time this study was undertaken. Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the coverage given to the rates issue in terms of too little coverage, about the right amount of coverage, or too much coverage. These responses were interpreted as indicating that employees believed they were under-informed, adequately informed, or over-informed, respectively. The resulting data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Perceived Credibility by Perceived Volume of Coverage

Perceived Newspaper Credibility		Perceived volume of coverage			Totals (Marginals) (n's)
		Too Little	About Right	Too Much	
Affirmative	No.	75	439	48	562
	%	61.5	93.2	60.8	
Negative	No.	47	32	31	110
	%	38.5	6.8	39.2	
	Totals	122	471	79	672*

*Differs from total because of missing data

$x^2 = 104.868$ 2 df ($p < .001$)

As shown by the data in Table 2, a strong positive relationship was found to exist between perceptions of being adequately informed on a matter of importance to the organization and perceptions of the newspaper as being a reliable source of information. Only 6.8 percent of those who approved the newspaper's coverage of the service-rates issue indicated a lack of confidence in the newspaper's integrity. By contrast, almost 40 percent of those who reported that the newspaper had provided too little or too much coverage of the rates issue gave negative responses to the credibility question.

Interestingly, employees who were on opposite ends of the coverage continuum, the self-declared under-informed and over-informed, were divided in almost identical proportions with respect to newspaper credibility. That is, approximately 61 percent of each group expressing dissatisfaction with the volume of coverage given to the proposed increase in service rates nonetheless perceived the newspaper to be a reliable source of information; approximately 39 percent of each of these groups indicated a lack of confidence in the newspaper as a credible source of information.

It should be noted that among those who found the newspaper's coverage to be other than "about right" (201 employees in all), those who judged the coverage to be insufficient (122 persons, representing 61 percent of the total) outnumbered those who perceived the coverage to be excessive by about 20 percent. That is, six of each ten who were dissatisfied with the coverage indicated that more--rather than less--should have been reported.

Discussion

The difficulties associated with efforts to communicate effectively with a large employee audience *en masse* are well documented. Audience heterogeneity is typically cited as the communicator's foremost problem. This study was an exploratory search for a way to reduce the indisputable heterogeneity of a large internal audience to manageable proportions. The search was for common denominators among readers of a company newspaper, shared perceptions and behaviors that might be characterized as group traits.

The study found differences in job levels and years of service to be positively related to differences in readership habits. Readership was greater among employees classified as management than among nonmanagement personnel and greater among employees with more than twenty years of service than among employees with less company tenure.

These findings, at first glance, may seem only to confirm what anyone might expect to find. After all, a company newspaper is a communication tool of management, so persons in management might reasonably be expected to take more interest in reading it than others. As for long-time employees, they almost surely have become acquainted with a great many of their co-workers over the years, are likely to be active in company-sponsored activities, and thus are likely to be faithful readers of the newspaper simply to keep abreast of friends, the social milieu, and the company benefits which they intend to be using before too many more years pass. Such interpretations are not, however, entirely satisfactory.

The study reported by Pavlik, Nwosu and Ettel (1982) sought to associate motives similar to those presented in the preceding paragraph with readership habits and preferences for particular kinds of news content and found that no statistically significant relationships emerged. They found no positive relationship between length of employment and readership of social relations content, or between length of employment and overall newsletter readership, but did find length of employment to be positively related to reading to find out what was going on within the company. Similarly, these researchers found that position in the decision-making hierarchy (assumed to be roughly equivalent to the job-levels variable used in the present study) was not positively related to either a specific preference for company news or to overall readership of the newsletter. Since the findings being discussed here are almost totally at odds with those of Pavlik *et al*, other interpretations are warranted.

One possible explanation for the high readership level among the management group examined in this study is that the newspaper is an additional source of information which they want and need in order to perform effectively. This interpretation is consistent with the attitudinal data presented by Morgan and Schiemann (1983), which indicates that 60 percent of all employees, including managers, feel that their companies are not keeping them well informed and, as previously mentioned, rely heavily on the grapevine for current information.

The findings that newer employees read less of the newspaper than other segments of the workforce and that veterans with more than twenty years of service read more of the paper than any other group tend to bear out the contention of Kobayashi (1970) that newer employees are likely to be relatively indifferent to the needs of the organization, whereas the veterans see their own lives and fortunes tied to the life and fortune of the company and care enough to get involved. Similarly, these findings tend to support the conclusion of Aiello (1983) that younger workers are strongly disposed to resist becoming a "company man" or "company woman," and simply are not as interested in the organization as their old-timer counterparts.

Data from this study also indicated statistically significant positive relationships between perceived newspaper credibility and two of the three employment-related variables: job levels and work locations. Management personnel were found to be more favorable in their perceptions than were nonmanagement employees, and those working in the headquarters city showed a greater inclination to perceive the newspaper as a credible source than did those working at outstate locations.

The fact that 90.1 percent of the management group and only 79.8 percent of the nonmanagement group expressed confidence in the newspaper's credibility may seem to verify the mutual distrust between management and workers which Gardner (1946) indicated was more or less in the natural order of things. Such an explanation cannot completely be discounted but also seems unlikely to be a sufficient explanation. The fact that almost 80 percent of the nonmanagement group perceived the newspaper as honest and accurate, even though they knew full well that the publication was a communication tool of management, gives little support to the notion of built-in bias among nonmanagement personnel.

Perhaps the difference between the management and nonmanagement groups' perceptions of the newspaper as a source of honest and accurate information can be explained, in part at least, by differential access to information. That is,

many employees (more often management than nonmanagement) in the course of their daily work have access to information which aids in making judgments about the truth or untruth of reports from other sources. A note penned on one of the survey questionnaires by a respondent (the handwriting appeared to be feminine) makes the point very well. The note read:

> I know a lot of people around here think that the rate increase is just a rip-off, but I know a bit about the business. The newspaper did give honest and accurate reports of the facts.

Among the more provocative findings of the study were those pertinent to outstate employees. Outstate employees did not vary significantly from in-city employees in readership habits, but the two groups differed substantially in their perceptions of newspaper credibility. Theoretically, it seems contradictory that those who have less confidence in the newspaper as a credible source would nevertheless expose themselves to its contents as freely as those who have more faith in the medium's reliability. This seeming contradiction perhaps only serves to verify the contention of previous researchers that physical distance is conducive to psychological distance among employees. Obviously the outstate employees were as interested in company affairs as those working in the headquarters city. However, something--perhaps psychological remoteness--appears to have predisposed them to be less trusting of the information they received. Of the several groups examined, the outstate group was the least inclined to credit the newspaper with integrity in reportage.

The finding of a strong positive relationship between adequate information (neither too much nor too little) relative to a significant company action and perceptions of the newspaper as a reliable source of information appears to confirm conventional wisdom in that over-sell and under-tell are equally to be avoided in communicating with internal audiences. Still, despite the strength of the relationship ($p < .001$), the data generated by this investigation also tend to verify the report of Morgan and Schiemann (1983) that a relatively high percentage of employees who feel their organizations are not telling them enough nonetheless express confidence in the credibility of internal communications. The present study revealed that 61.5 percent of those who believed the newspaper had provided too little information about the service rate increase, and 60.8 percent of those who thought the newspaper had over-reported the matter were among those registering favorable perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source. These percentages pale, of course, beside the 93.2 percent of employees who indicated satisfaction with both the amount of coverage and the newspaper's reliability.

Conclusions

Each of the three employment-related variables used in this study was found to be associated with significant differences among groups of employees as readers of a company newspaper, but only one--job level--revealed significant differences in both readership habits and perceived newspaper credibility. These results seem to verify the need for internal communicators to seek ways of overcoming the communication barriers that differential job levels, work locations, and years of service represent.

In this investigator's judgment, the more important findings of the study are those associated with groups who differed significantly in one respect but not in another. Employees were found to differ significantly in readership habits on the basis of years of service; however, these same groups did not differ significantly in their perceptions of newspaper credibility. The work locations variable produced opposite findings: no significant differences in readership habits, but a very significant difference in perceptions of the newspaper as a credible source. Apparently the inclination to read a lot or a little of the company newspaper is not a particularly good indicator of whether the reader has confidence in the source. This study, therefore, provides little comfort to the communicator who believes the company publication to be a success because a readership study indicates that the publication is well read.

Bormann, Howell, Nichols and Shapiro (1969, p. 228), in discussing the psychology of motives, suggest that a communicator must build two lists: a list of the "ways that people tend to resemble each other in their responses" and a list of "the ways in which they tend to differ." In this instance, the fact that certain groups of employees were found to differ in one respect and not in another seems, in itself, to be the problem to be reckoned with. Further studies of internal audiences as groups defined by years of service and work locations would surely be fruitful.

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APPENDIX A

Comparison of Survey Respondents
To General Composition of Employees

Employment Categories	Total Employees N = 11,000	Survey Respondents N = 734
Job level:		
Management	35.0%*	36.4%
Nonmanagement	65.0%*	62.8%
		.8%**
Years of service with the company:		
0 to 5 years	21.6%	21.3%
6 to 10 years	17.7%	21.9%
11 to 20 years	30.2%	34.3%
More than 20 years	30.5%	30.8%
		.7%**
Work location:		
In-city	55.0%*	60.6%
Outstate	45.0%*	39.4%

*Approximate percentages, supplied by the company.
**No response on questionnaire.